



December 2002

'Helping Hands' spread cheer in PR Directorate

by Michael Kelly, Propulsion Directorate

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio

— The spirit of Christmas is alive and well in the Propulsion Directorate this holiday season.

Santa may even be a bit envious of the frenzied pace of elf-like activity as the directorate's team of "Helping Hands" prepares to bless six local families with presents and enough fixings to provide a complete holiday meal. In addition, the team provides toiletry items, laundry detergent, paper towels, toilet paper, all kinds of canned goods, flour, sugar, coffee and hot chocolate.

Helping Hands, a charitable, non-profit organization made up of 17 Propulsion Directorate employees, gives Santa a run for his money every year, according to Lynne Nelson, the organization's president. The stated goal is simple enough, she said, "Help individuals and families in need in the local community. This is our biggest accomplishment throughout the year."

Nelson, who has three Christmas deliveries under her belt, is amazed at how much blessing comes from the team's efforts. "I remember one family a few years ago that when we asked the mother what she needed most she said, 'if you can just provide my children with some underwear I'd be thrilled.'"

"My favorite part of this work is seeing what it means to the folks we help. It's quite a moving experience," she explained. "I remember feeling like I was going to cry all the way back to the base after we made deliveries last year. We just don't realize day to day how much we have and how much we take it for granted."

Judging by the year-long support generated within the directorate, the men and women she works with seem to agree.

"I think we're fortunate because we are able to support quite a few folks with the generous contributions of people within the propulsion directorate," Nelson pointed out.

That support was evident just prior to the Thanksgiving holiday when one of their "adopted families" was hit with a special need — their refrigerator died, according to Linda Hartsock, current Helping Hands treasurer and secretary. The adopted family was a single mother who has Multiple Sclerosis and two young children.



Capt. Michelle Rauch, a chemist in the Propulsion Directorate's Turbine Engine Division, puts the finishing touches on a gift for a young child adopted by the Helping Hands organization. (Air Force photo by Michael Kelly)

Once the need was known and the directorate grapevine kicked into action, Helping Hands had more than \$360 in pledges for a brand new refrigerator in less than an hour, Hartsock said. Total donations reached nearly \$600 and the money above and beyond the cost of the refrigerator went to the Helping Hands Christmas fund. "The manager of the H.H. Gregg store where we bought the refrigerator also waived the delivery fee when he found out what we were doing."

That spirit of giving has had a tremendous impact on contributors as well as recipients, Nelson said.

"One of the families we sponsored last year contacted us last week and shared that they had a much better year this year and wanted to help someone like they had been helped last year," she said. "They wrote us a check for \$75."

"That to me is just overwhelming and it meant a lot to all of us. That's what makes this all worthwhile." @